

# **SUPPORT STAFF HANDBOOK**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This Handbook has been produced in consultation with the relevant Trade Unions and applies to all Support Staff within the University of Aberdeen.

If you wish to receive any policies or procedures outlined within this Handbook please contact the Human Resources Office on 01224 273500 or [humanresources@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:humanresources@abdn.ac.uk).

## **2.0 Probation**

All new appointees to the Support Staff Structure are required to undergo a formal probationary period of service of six months. During this time Support Staff are required to demonstrate their suitability for employment in the University of Aberdeen with particular regard to the standards of:

- Performance of Duty
- Attendance
- Health
- Conduct

### **2.1 Duration of Probation**

The probationary period of service lasts for six months starting from the date of commencement of employment. It may last longer in exceptional circumstances, which are detailed below under Extension of Probation.

### **2.2 Monitoring of Probation**

The Head of School/Section/line manager is required to provide a formal report on the probationer's progress covering the four areas listed above. Overall performance is assessed in terms of how efficiently and reliably they perform their duties. If the probationer is unable to perform their job satisfactorily, the Head of School/Section/line manager will discuss this matter with them and may arrange for additional training to reach the standard required. The probationer should not hesitate to approach their Head of School/Section/line manager for help if they need to do so. The University will assess the overall suitability of attendance, health and conduct records during the period of probation against standard criteria applied to all staff on probation.

### **2.3 Confirmation of Probationary Period**

If the probationary period of service has progressed satisfactorily the employee will receive confirmation of its completion from the Human Resources Office.

### **2.4 Extension of Probation**

The probationary period of service may be extended in exceptional circumstances if:

- (i) performance, attendance, health, or conduct has been unsatisfactory in some way but there are good prospects of improvement. Extension will normally be for a further period of 6 months and is subject to a maximum probationary period of 15 months overall. You will be advised in writing of the duration of the probationary period of service and the reasons for it before the end of the original period.
- (ii) The total amount of absence (including sickness and special leave) amounts to more than one month during the probationary period. Such circumstances are exceptional and the extension will normally be for the cumulative period of absence, and is subject to a maximum probationary period of service of 15 months overall. If a probationary period is lengthened in this way the individual will be advised in writing of the duration of the extension and the reasons for it before the end of the original period.

### **2.5 Termination of Appointment**

An individual's Head of School/Line manager will inform the member of Support Staff on probation how they are progressing and will monitor their overall probationary period. If the individual fails to reach satisfactory standards during their probationary period of service the contract of employment may, after suitable warning, be terminated. An individual whose contract is so terminated has the right of appeal and details of this entitlement and the procedure to be adopted would be communicated to the individual concerned in the notification of termination.

### **3.0 Hours of Work and Rates of Pay**

The normal working week for full-time employees is 36.5 hours, normally spread over a period of up to five days, which may include Saturday and Sunday. The normal working week is exclusive of meal breaks. The number of hours normally worked in a week may vary in a cycle of duty providing that the average number of hours per week for the complete cycle is 36.5. The hours to be worked will be decided by the Head of Section/School. The hours worked are subject to variation in the interests of the efficiency of the University.

Employees who work on a Saturday and/or Sunday as a standard part of their normal working week, or on Saturday and/or Sunday only, will receive payment at a standard rate appropriate to their grade. Where an employee works five days per week including Saturday and Sunday they will be granted rest days in lieu. The University will agree with the recognised Trade Unions the roles which fall into this method of working.

#### **3.1 Shift Working**

Some employees will be required to work shift patterns e.g. annualised hours or night shift working. In such circumstances the shift patterns will be governed by certain protocols that will form part of the contract of employment and will supersede any of these terms.

#### **3.2 Overtime Working**

Overtime working is defined as hours worked outside the normal working week of 36.5 hours. Therefore a part-time employee is paid at the standard rate of pay for additional hours unless the additional hours worked in the week exceed 36.5 hours or the additional hours are worked at the weekend outwith the standard working week.

Wherever possible voluntary overtime will be compensated by time-off in lieu at the appropriate rate for each hour worked. If it is not possible to provide time off in lieu, due to operational requirements, payment will be made at the appropriate rate as per below:

Monday to Saturday	Time and a half (i.e. hourly rate x 1.5)
Sunday	Double time (i.e. hourly rate x 2)

Some employees will be required to work contractual overtime.

Where overtime is considered voluntary it is agreed that wherever possible employees should cooperate in working any overtime. As much advance warning as practicable of overtime working will be given but it is unavoidable that some overtime occurs at short notice due to sickness and emergencies. Overtime must have the prior approval of the relevant manager, retrospective claims for overtime will not normally be considered but in exceptional or emergency situations consideration will not be unreasonably refused.

## **4.0 Holiday Entitlement**

The University's leave year runs from 1 October to the following 30 September. It is the normal practice of the University to not allow more than 5 days to be carried forward to the next leave year. These 5 days must be used by 31 March in the following leave year, it is not possible to take any days when the University is closed (e.g. public/local/statutory/closed) from your previous year's entitlement. If an individual carries forward more than 5 days without the prior agreement of their line manager the additional days will be lost.

If there are exceptional circumstances that would lead to an individual wishing to carry forward more than 5 days they must seek the approval of their line manager in advance. If the request is refused the line manager is required to provide justification for the refusal. If a member of staff is dissatisfied with the outcome they will have the right of appeal.

Any holidays which have not been taken by 31 March in the calendar year following the leave year shall lapse. Within the course of a contract or in a series of continuous contracts it is not normal practice to pay for outstanding leave not taken.

Support Staff shall be entitled to 34 working days per annum (pro rata) as holidays with pay as set out in their Statement of Particulars of Terms and Conditions of Employment. Within the 34 days entitlement there shall be:

Twenty days for annual leave

Eight days for Public/Statutory/Local Holidays.

<b>Christmas Day</b>	}	<b>or days in lieu if these fall on a Saturday or Sunday</b>
<b>Boxing Day</b>		
<b>New Year's Day</b>		
<b>2 January</b>		
<b>Aberdeen Spring Holiday</b>		<b>normally in April</b>
<b>May Day</b>		
<b>Aberdeen Summer</b>		<b>normally in July</b>
<b>Autumn Holiday</b>		<b>normally in September</b>

Three University closed days to be taken at times determined by the University after consultation with the relevant Trades Union (presently between Christmas/New Year).

Three days to be taken at the discretion of individual members of the Non-Academic Staff after prior agreement with the Head of School/Administrative Section concerned.

Non-Academic Staff in the employment of the University are entitled to the following additional holidays:

- one day to be taken during the leave year after five years of continuous service.
- one further day to be taken during the leave year after seven years of continuous service.
- one further day to be taken during the leave year after twelve years of continuous service.

Annual leave is arranged on a School/Administrative Sectional basis and must be taken at times convenient to the School/Administrative Section with the prior agreement of the Head of School/Administrative Section; reasonable notice must be given by both sides.

### **4.1 Holiday Entitlement during period of Sickness Absence**

Where an employee has been absent through illness for a period or periods exceeding three months it shall be at the discretion of the University

- either (a) to grant the full period of annual leave.
- or (b) to limit the annual leave to a period of at least the amount proportionate to the period(s) of actual service which has (have) been given during the leave year.

In the event of sickness coinciding with any period of annual leave an employee is required to submit a doctor's medical certificate and will be regarded as being on sick leave from the date of the medical certificate. After return to duty the individual will be allowed, at a mutually convenient time, the leave with pay, which they would have received if they had not been absent through illness, i.e. Holiday Pay and Sick Pay cannot be received simultaneously. Sickness must be supported by a medical certificate.

An employee who is sick at the time when their School/Administrative Section is closed for any of the 8 public, local or statutory holidays or the 3 University-closed days does **not** receive an alternative day's holiday in lieu.

#### 4.2 Part time Staff

A part-time employee who is employed throughout the whole year shall be entitled to holidays with pay, the rate of pay being proportionate to the shorter working period.

An employee (either whole or part-time) who is employed regularly for only part of a year shall be granted holidays proportionate to the total period of actual service in the leave year. The **pro rata** calculation to establish his/her entitlement will be based on the overall holiday entitlement (34 days).

e.g.

If an individual works half-time, three days per week for five months of the year, then holiday entitlement would be calculated thus:

$$\begin{array}{rclclcl} 5/12 & \times & 3/5 & \times & 34 \text{ days} & = & 8 \frac{1}{2} \text{ days} \\ \text{months} & & \text{days} & & & & \\ & & \text{per week} & & & & \end{array}$$

The individual would receive half pay for those days.

Any closed days or Public Holidays which occur during the time worked will be deducted to give an individual's entitlement.

#### 4.3 Commencement and Termination of Employment

An employee leaving the service of the University shall be entitled, before he leaves the service, to any accrued holidays proportionate to the actual period of service in the current leave year, provided that if it is not possible to grant such holidays the employee shall be given the appropriate payment in lieu. The calculation of holidays outstanding will be based on the overall holiday entitlement (34 days) less the days used. Holidays are awarded for complete months of continuous service, a complete month being the period between a date in one month and the immediately preceding date in the following month (e.g. 15 February to 14 March inclusive).

Each School/Administrative Section will keep a record of the annual leave entitlement of members of staff. If an employee leaves the employment of the University, then School/Administrative Sections should notify the Human Resources Office of any outstanding leave; this should normally be taken before employment ceases. If it is not possible for this leave to be taken, then payment in lieu may be made.

An employee entering the University service during the leave year shall be entitled to receive paid holiday proportionate to their total complete months of service in the current leave year. The calculation of their entitlement will be based on the overall holiday entitlement (34 days).

## **5.0 Sickness Absence**

The University's Sick Pay Scheme covers employees who are absent from duty owing to certified illness, including industrial disease or accident. Entitlement to payment for a period of absence due to illness is calculated on a rolling twelve-month period. This means that any paid sickness absence in the previous twelve months will be taken into account when calculating your entitlement to University sick pay.

Entitlement for payment in accordance with the University Sick Pay Scheme will be on the following Scale:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Full Pay</b>	<b>Half Pay</b>
Up to 6 months	Statutory Sick Pay only	Statutory Sick Pay only
6 months to One year	2 months	2 months
Second/Third Year	3 months	3 months
Fourth/Fifth Year	5 months	5 months
After Fifth Year	6 months	6 months

The University Court may, upon appropriate evidence brought to its notice, extend the period of sick leave on full or half pay beyond the limits stated above.

The payment made will not exceed the sum of benefits payable under full pay. Accordingly any SSP payment will be deducted from a payment equivalent to full pay. In addition any payment of half salary plus SSP which exceeds full salary will be reduced by the amount which exceeds full salary. Full details of permissible deductions from sick pay payments are available by contacting the Payroll Office.

The University reserves the right to withhold or review payment for sickness absence in any of the following circumstances:

- Where the incapacity results from active participation in sport
- Where the absence is attributed to deliberate misconduct
- Where the absence is the result of an accident and damages may be receivable from a third party in respect of that accident
- In any other circumstances where compensation for loss of earnings can be obtained from a third party

### **5.1 Conditions for Claiming Allowance**

You are required to advise your Head of Section or Supervisor of the reason for your absence as early as possible on the first normal working day that you are absent. Where possible this advice should be given by telephone. Any period of absence must be accompanied by a self-certificate covering the period from your first day of illness up to and including the seventh consecutive day of illness. After seven consecutive days (including weekends or rest days) of incapacity for work you will be required to produce a medical certificate.

An employee who is late in notifying sickness for one or more qualifying days or who provides an unsatisfactory reason for the absence may lose entitlement to SSP and salary/wage for the days in question.

### **5.2 Medical Examination**

An employee shall, if required by the University (and at the University's expense), during any period of prolonged absence or frequent absences, undergo a medical examination by a registered medical practitioner nominated by the University to ascertain fitness for employment. In the event of a difference in medical opinion as to the employee's fitness for work, the matter shall, at the request of the University or the employee, be submitted to an independent medical referee chosen jointly. If the referee determines that the employee is fit to resume work, the allowance under the University Sick Pay Scheme ceases with effect from the date on which the referee determines that the employee should return to work. The date of return to work should be as soon as possible after the referee makes their decision. If the referee determines that the employee is not fit to return to work then any allowance payable will continue in accordance with the University Sick Pay Scheme.

## **6.0 Discipline**

An individual's employment is governed by the Disciplinary Procedure for Support Staff which outlines the procedure for handling discipline. A member of staff who has a grievance concerning any aspect of his work conditions of employment should raise the matter in the first instance with their Supervisor. Copies of the procedures on Disciplinary are available for reference in the Human Resources Office.

## **7.0 Grievance**

An individual's employment is governed by the Grievance Procedure for Support Staff which outlines the procedure for handling a grievance. A member of staff who has a grievance concerning any aspect of his work conditions of employment should raise the matter in the first instance with their Supervisor. Copies of the procedures on Grievance are available for reference in the Human Resources Office.

## **8.0 Special Leave**

### **8.1 Compassionate Leave**

The University of Aberdeen recognises the need to support staff by providing reasonable time for special leave on a non-recurrent basis to meet particular circumstances.

Leave of absence with pay may be granted, at the discretion of the Head of School/Administrative Section, to members of staff in the event of the death of a relation as follows :

- In the case of the death of a close relation (i.e. normally a husband or wife, parent, brother or sister and child), up to a maximum of one week's leave;
- In the case of the death of a relation, including relatives-in-law, the day of the funeral.
- 

In particular, individual cases, the compassionate leave provision may not be sufficient, and in such cases, the member of staff concerned should discuss the position with the Head of School/Administrative Section, who will consider the matter sympathetically and may recommend to the Staffing and Development Committee that a further period of leave of absence be granted with or without pay.

For further information contact your Human Resources Officer  
To access the Human Resources web page: [www.abdn.ac.uk/hr](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr)

### **8.2 Maternity Leave**

Your entitlement to maternity leave and pay is based on your earnings during a specific time period before your maternity leave; and your length of service with the University of Aberdeen. The University provides 5 options with varying levels of benefits.

For full details please contact your Human Resources Officer  
To access the Human Resources web page: [www.abdn.ac.uk/hr](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr)

### **8.3 Paternity Leave**

Your entitlement to Paternity/Co Maternity leave and pay is based on your earnings during a specific time period before your Paternity/Co Maternity leave; and your length of service with the University of Aberdeen. You must have 26 weeks service at your Matching Week (in cases of adoption) or at the 26th week of pregnancy to qualify. The University provides 4 options with varying level of benefits.

For full details please contact your Human Resources Officer  
To access the Human Resources web page: [www.abdn.ac.uk/hr](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr)

### **8.4 Parental Leave**

Parental leave is a right for parents to take time off work to look after a child or make arrangements for the child's welfare. Parents can use it to spend more time with children and strike a better balance between their work and family commitments. Please note that all periods of parental leave are unpaid. Parental leave is for each child, so if twins are born, leave may be taken for each child.

For full details please contact your Human Resources Officer  
To access the Human Resources web page: [www.abdn.ac.uk/hr](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr)

### 8.5 Jury Service

Members of staff summoned for jury service should inform their Head of School/Administrative Section of their summons. When called for jury service members should make a claim for loss of earnings and should contact the Payroll Office, Finance Office, regarding the figure for the daily rate of earnings to be included on the official form of summons for jury service. The amount received should be notified to that Section so that the non-taxable payment made may be deducted from salary.

Any queries on this matter should be referred to the Human Resources Office

### 8.6 Time off for Voluntary Public Service

The University wishes to encourage all categories of staff to participate in public duties as defined below provided that the amount of time-off is reasonable in all the circumstances, having regard in particular to the effect which such absences may have on the smooth running of the School/Administrative Section and on the workload of colleagues in that School/Administrative Section. In order to assist individual members of staff and Heads of School/Administrative Section, the University Court has attempted to define the amount of time-off for this purpose which may be regarded as "reasonable".

Employees should obtain the agreement of the University before undertaking voluntary public service. For such employees, the University shall grant, subject to the need to ensure that the service of the School/Administrative Section is properly maintained, special leave with pay not exceeding 18 days in any period of 12 months for the purpose of carrying out those public duties defined in Section 59 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, - namely,

- a. a Justice of the Peace;
- b. a member of a local authority;
- c. a member of any statutory tribunal;
- d. a member of a health board;
- e. a member of a school or college council or the governing body of a central institution or a college of education;
- f. a member of a river purification board.

The number of days quoted above is exclusive to any absences which may be compensated, where appropriate within conditions of appointment, by work outside normal hours or during holiday periods, by prior arrangement with the relevant Head of School/Administrative Section.

Any special leave authorised for public duties may be taken in days or half-days, as required, with the prior agreement of the employee's Head of School/Administrative Section or his nominee. Such agreement will not be unreasonably withheld.

An employee who is appointed Chairman, or equivalent, of a public body and thereby attracts additional duties may be granted up to an additional 6 days' paid leave for carrying out such additional duties, including magisterial duties.

Employees who are granted paid special leave in accordance with the paragraphs above are not required to refund to the University any fees or attendance allowances received, although the University Court reserves the right to reconsider this question. No travelling or subsistence allowances shall be paid by the University.

If in exceptional circumstances the total of 18 days (or for a Chairman 18 + 6 days) should prove insufficient for the duties concerned, consideration will be given to the granting of a further period of leave of absence, which may be unpaid.

### 8.7 Service in Volunteer Reserve Forces

A volunteer member of the Volunteer Reserve Forces who attends an annual camp (or exercise) for a period of not less than a week is granted for that purpose additional leave equal to the period for which the employee actually attends the training camp not exceeding a period of 15 days.

In addition to leave, full pay for one week of attendance at a camp or exercise is granted - this pay being in addition to pay received by the member of staff from HM Forces. The remaining period can be taken as unpaid leave of absence or against holiday entitlement.

### 8.8 Election for Parliament or Local Government

#### Parliamentary Membership

The University Court has agreed that up to three weeks' paid leave for the period of an election campaign be granted to staff who are adopted as candidates for a Parliamentary seat.

A member of staff who intends to become a candidate for a parliamentary seat should notify the Secretary to the University through his Head of School/Administrative Section of his adoption and in due course give an indication of the period to be taken as paid leave of absence.

No decision has been made on the position when a member of staff is elected to Parliament, but it has been agreed that the question of unpaid leave for a member of staff be considered in each case on its merits - due regard being given to the interests of the individual concerned, his School/Administrative Section and his replacement.

#### Local Government Councillorship

A member of staff who stands as a candidate for election as a Local Government (District/Regional) Councillor is not entitled to any special paid leave of absence during election periods but should advise the Secretary to the University, through his Head of School/Administrative Section, at a very early date in his adoption as a candidate since the role of candidate may necessitate time off or redistribution of workload. Unpaid leave or leave against holiday entitlement may be taken by arrangement with the Head of School/Administrative Section who should notify the Secretary to the University of any special pay arrangements that are required.

The time-off to which a member of staff is entitled in the event of election to a Local Authority is set out above under Time-off for Voluntary Public Service.

#### Agent in Local Government Elections

No provision is made for paid leave of absence for a member of staff wishing to act as an agent in a Local Government election, and accordingly any time-off required for such activities must be taken as unpaid leave of absence or against holiday entitlement after consultation with the Head of School/Administrative Section who should advise the Secretary to the University of any arrangements affecting the payment of salary.

### 8.9 Study Leave for Open University Courses

A member of staff in full-time employment studying for an approved Open University (OU) course is granted paid leave of absence in any one year to attend a vacation course where this is an integral part of the OU course. In addition, a member of staff studying for an OU degree is granted special leave to sit OU examinations.

### 8.10 Urgent Domestic Distress

The University of Aberdeen commits to supporting employees by providing reasonable time, to be determined by a relevant person, to:

- ❖ resolve unexpected disruption to or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant defined as a spouse, child, parent or a person who lives in the same house as the employee otherwise than as a tenant or lodger;
- ❖ deal with an incident that involves a child of the employee and which occurs unexpectedly in a period during which an educational establishment that the child attends is responsible for them.

This is in addition to the University's policy on compassionate leave.

## **9.0 Superannuation & Retirement**

Full-time and part time members of Support Staff, who are over 20 years of age and under age 60 on appointment are eligible for membership of the University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme; membership of the scheme is optional.

All employees contributing to the University Scheme will be contracted out of SERPS under the terms of a contracting-out certificate issued to the University by the Occupational Pensions Board; employees who are not contributors to a scheme are required to be members of SERPS under the terms of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975.

The normal retirement age for all employees in the University is 65. Details of the University's retirement procedure is contained within the Procedure on Staff Retirement. Details of early retirement, prior to age 65, may be found in the explanatory booklet for members of the University of Aberdeen's Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme.

Full details of the Scheme are detailed within the Member's Explanatory Booklet which is available from the Pension Office within the Finance Office.

## **10.0 Trade Unions**

A member of the Support Staff has the right to belong to a Trade Union of their own choice or to belong to no Trade Union. The University recognises UNISON and AMICUS as the appropriate unions to represent Support Staff. The Transport and General Workers' Union has representational rights in Hillhead Halls only.

A copy of the current Procedure Agreement is available for inspection by contacting the Human Resources Office or by contacting your local Trade Union Representative.

## **11.0 Training**

Universities should advise their employees on, and encourage them to undertake approved courses of training. The Joint Committee commends to Universities the provision of appropriate training facilities not only for trainees and apprentices but for other employees if such training would help to equip them for better performance of their duties and responsibilities within the University.

Full details of the courses available can be found at [www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/esdu](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/esdu)